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The Magic Window

By GEORGE M. WRIGHT

This is a story of many years ago, of things that were told by the magic kitchen window in an old home on Laguna Street in San Francisco. A very magic window this, for grown-ups could rub and rub its glass without ever seeing more than a very indifferent backyard, while children had merely to press their adaptable little noses against its cool surface to find themselves in an enchanted world full of the most exciting adventures.

Great tears rolled down the cheeks of two small brothers, one four, one five, huddled in the window watching the twilight of a summer day in 1909. Their pet guinea pig had disappeared down the dark alley-way and out of their tender young hearts forever, grasped in the jaws of a marauding Scotch terrier.

Six years later, a bird-bath devised from the saucer of a large jardiniere was installed in one corner of the little garden. For three weeks the water was freshened daily, but no bird was tempted, and only a cat, black and ominous, came to drink and to leer up at the kitchen window. Then one morning, at breakfast time, a bird came fluttering down through the vines on the old board fence and gingerly hopped on to the rim of the bath, dipping up a billful or two of water, before hastening off in the greatest confusion. But—most horrible of doubts—perhaps this was just a common “chippy.” Not until his birthday brought a bird guide to his hands did the embryonic ornithologist who watched at the kitchen window identify his guest as a song sparrow. A big game hunter bagging his first white rhinoceros could never have been more puffed with pride of success. From that day on, the little song sparrow was his favorite bird, and neither sandhill crane, nor surfbird, nor trumpeter swan, met with in faraway places in later years, ever challenged its throne.

The song sparrow must have been the trail-blazer who told others, for soon the Nuttall's sparrows came. After that there were green-backed goldfinches, Anna's and Allen's hummers, and others. In autumn, winter migrants came to swell the list. The magic window revealed yellow warblers, western tanagers, and red-breasted nuthatches, to the one who possessed its secret, but ordinary folk could never see anything but “those dirty sparrows,” and they fretted about smudge marks on the glass and the putty that was crumbling on the sills.

One winter, a hermit thrush, most chic of birds, came to live in the block. A bath a week more than satisfied the bird student at the window, but the hermit was not content with one a day. Two or three, each followed by a complete toilet, were necessary to maintain the perfection of order that marked its dress. One morning in early spring just before the regular time for the northward departure of its kind, it was found feet up at the foot of a wall near a small tree. Not a feather was deranged, and the cause of death remains a mystery to this day. The thrush was buried under the moss-covered wall.

Another year a flock of restless robins blew down out of the sky, like leaves scuttling before a storm. They feasted on the black berries of an English ivy

hedge that had grown and spread for years over a nearby garden bulkhead. Theirs was not the faint-hearted way, and they seemed to give confidence to the shier birds. Even the red-shafted flicker followed their lead into the garden. Three robins tried to occupy the bath at once, and the little song sparrows, the ruby-crowned kinglets, and the bush-tit bided their turn in the safety of the bushes.

A Wilson's snipe with a broken wing was rescued at Merced Lake and brought to the Laguna Street house. After a futile attempt to put the wing in splints, the bird was released in the garden. Though it would follow the fence line all around, it did not seem to know how to get the earth worms that were so quickly discovered and pulled out by the robins. So the worms were first dug in the garden, then packed into some damp earth which was carried in on a flat piece of cardboard and deposited right next to a wall in one of the carpeted rooms. As soon as the snipe came to this earth in its patrol along the walls, it would begin to feed by thrusting its long bill with sensitive expansible tip straight downward into the earth and drawing out the worms. Apparently the hit-and-miss method was used in locating food.

A feeding table was mounted on a long willowy pole out in the central flower bed. This bed was planted with narcissus bulbs, which still lay dormant. The saucy English sparrows, the golden-crowned sparrows, and the Nuttall's sparrows, scattered the food off the table on to the ground, and the more timid birds learned to come there for the seeds long before they dared to venture on the table.

Early one spring morning in 1920, it must have been about seven o'clock, a robin was busy on the feeding table when a large rat ran out from under a shed to feed on the crumbs scattered below. In an instant the robin was down on the ground and chasing that rat around and around the feed table at such speed that it was not possible to distinguish anything beyond a blur of motion. After a few seconds of this, the rat darted off at a tangent headed for the shed, in complete rout.

That fall the boy who had been born in the old house moved away, and with him went the secret of the magic window.



Arroyo Mocho Canyon Birds

After a lapse of two years another extra field trip was taken on Sunday, May 20, 1934, to the McCoy Ranch, on the Arroyo Mocho Road, about five miles from Livermore.*

As the members of the Association failed to sign up in sufficient number to make it possible to engage a Gray Line bus, private automobiles were used to take those who had expressed a desire to go.

The sky was overcast except for a few short intervals of sunshine and the day was quite sultry.

This year we found the McCoy Ranch unusually dry and the season considerably advanced. All that remained of the creek were a few small stagnant pools. There was a noticeable decrease in the number of both individuals and species with the exception of the sparrow hawks. In the top of a broken-off sycamore a sparrow hawk was nesting; a little beyond in another sycamore, five young sparrow hawks were perched, and still farther on a young one, not yet able to fly, was found in the creek bottom.

A Black Phoebe's nest with three young in the barn, a Linnet's nest on the porch of the house, and a Quail with her family comprised the only evidence of nesting on the McCoy Ranch, that came under our observation.

Mr. Charles A. Bryant, finding an Anthony Green Heron and a Hairy Woodpecker, added two new species to the list for this region.

After a picnic under the oaks, we motored up the canyon a few miles. Here in a sycamore in the dry creek bed, we found an apartment house of birds. In the

lower branches a Green-backed Goldfinch was feeding her young still in the nest. Three occupied Linnet nests and two Oriole nests were also counted. Just below one of the Oriole's nests hung a Bush-tit's nest, and on top of it Linnets were apparently nesting, being noted entering and leaving. In a hole on the opposite side of the tree a Flicker had its nest with two young, making a total of nine families in one tree.

Here we added the Oriole to our list of nesting birds, their nests being very common. Our curiosity was somewhat aroused not merely in finding nests of Orioles here, but never having found them before, in finding them so numerous.

On a turn in the road in a retaining wall built of broken rocks, a pair of Rock Wrens and three young had their home. These we observed at very close range. Later just across the road an adult male Rock Wren perched on a fence within five feet of us and repeated his lively little song several times.

As a climax to the day, Western Blue Birds were seen hovering around a large hole in an oak tree, while Titmice and Linnets were present in the branches and a Slender-billed Nuthatch was coming down the trunk. At the same time an Ash-throated Flycatcher occupied a bare branch in the lower part of the tree and very near, on the ground, was another Rock Wren.

A list of forty-four species for the day was noted as follows:

| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Anthony Green Heron | Black Phoebe | Yellow Warbler |
| Turkey Vulture | Western Flycatcher | Pileolated Warbler |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Cliff Swallow | Meadowlark |
| Sparrow Hawk | California Jay | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Quail | Titmouse | Bullock Oriole |
| Killdeer | Bush-tit | Brewer Blackbird |
| Mourning Dove | Slender-billed Nuthatch | Black-headed Grosbeak |
| Anna Hummingbird | House Wren | English Sparrow |
| Red-shafted Flicker | Vigors Wren | Purple Finch |
| California Woodpecker | Rock Wren | Linnet |
| Hairy Woodpecker | Western Bluebird | Green-backed Goldfinch |
| Downy Woodpecker | Phainopepla | Lawrence Goldfinch |
| Nuttall Woodpecker | Shrike | Brown Towhee |
| Western Kingbird | Warbling Vireo | Lark Sparrow |
| Ash-throated Flycatcher | Lutescent Warbler | |

* For a description of this region see THE GULL, June, 1929.

Laura A. Stephens, Historian.



The June week-day trip was taken on Wednesday, June 20th, to Golden Gate Park. The day was sunny with a sharp wind blowing. The group of six members and two guests met at the Haight Street entrance, the flower garden end of the Park.

Many Allen Hummingbirds vied with Nuttall Sparrows for second place in numbers, with English Sparrows an easy first. As in other parts of the Park, the Anna Hummingbird was very scarce compared with the Allen.

Though the wind lessened, a cup of tea at the Japanese Tea Garden was a welcome addition to our sandwiches. After lunch, Stow and Metson Lakes were rounded, where a scant gathering of water birds was seen. The party crossed to Lloyd Lake and out by Twenty-first Avenue.

Russet-backed Thrushes, Yellow Warblers and Purple Finches sang constantly all day. The following small list of twenty-three species was seen:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Mallard | Flicker | Brewer Blackbird |
| Redhead Duck | Chickadee | Purple Finch |
| Ruddy Duck | Vigors Wren | House Finch |
| California Quail | Western Robin | San Francisco Towhee |
| American Coot | Russet-backed Thrush | Point Pinos Junco |
| Western Gull | Warbling Vireo | Nuttall Sparrow |
| Anna Hummingbird | Yellow Warbler | Song Sparrow |
| Allen Hummingbird | English Sparrow | |

Four permanent Stow Lake dwellers were seen: Black and Mute Swans, Canada Geese and Pekin Ducks. Cornelia C. Pringle, Leader and Historian.

Audubon Notes

July Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 12th, at 8 p. m., room 19, Ferry Building.

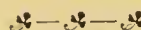
The speaker of the evening will be Dr. Adele Grant, whose subject will be "The Economic Value of Birds."



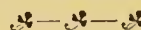
July Field Trip will be taken Sunday, the 15th, to Land's End, Cliff House and Golden Gate Park. Take Municipal car "C" and ride to end of line, where party will form at 9:30. Bring luncheon. Leader, Mrs. Albert B. Stephens.



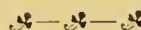
July Week Day trip will be taken on July 20th to Manzanita and up the Tennessee Cove Road. Take 8:45 a. m. Sausalito Ferry. Bring luncheon. Miss Pringle, leader.



Mr. Thomas W. Johnson, life member, died June 13, 1934.



Membership for the remainder of 1934 is \$1.50. This includes subscription to the monthly bulletin "The Gull", six field trips and six lectures.



June Meeting: The 203rd regular meeting was held on June 14th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with eighteen members present. President Joseph J. Webb presided.

The following observations were reported:

John Cushing, Jr.: June 9th, Liman-tour Bay, Raven's nest, young ready to fly; Marsh Hawk's nest; 10th, Raven's nest in a small pine tree.

Commander and Mrs. Parmenter: May 15, Olema Marsh, Black Rail; June 6, Cliff House, Heermann Gulls; 7th, Palo Alto, two Phainopepla and one at San Mateo.

Carl Smith: May 27th, Lake Merced, Western Tanager.

Mrs. Albert B. Stephens: June 14th, San Francisco Bay, many Murres.

In place of the regular lecture, members were invited to contribute to the evening's program by asking questions which in turn were answered by other members. This developed considerable discussion, which forced some of us to realize that although we had been familiar with certain species for a long time we had entirely missed some of their well known characteristics. It is believed that this realization will act as a stimulus toward more careful observation. The evening seemed to be greatly enjoyed by all and there have been several requests that we have more evenings devoted to questions and answers.



"The Birds of America": The Courvoisier Galleries have been especially fortunate in recently obtaining a very representative and meticulously selected group of impressions from the original edition of "The Birds of America" by Audubon. These may be seen during the next few weeks at 480 Post Street, San Francisco.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| President..... | Joseph J. Webb..... | 519 California St., San Francisco |
| Corresponding Secretary..... | C. B. Lastreto..... | 260 California St., San Francisco |
| Treasurer..... | Mrs. A. B. Stephens..... | 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco |

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Subscription to monthly Bulletin, \$1.00 per year. Single copies, 15c.

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Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer